

In Senate,

March 25, 1829.

REPORT

Of the committee on literature, relative to the incorporation of the Manhattan College.

The committee on literature, to which was referred the several petitions of the Rutgers' medical faculty, and of the students of medicine and surgery attending their instruction, in the city of New-York, praying that the professors composing that faculty, and their associates, may be incorporated by the name of Manhattan College, with the power of conferring the literary degrees usual to medical science,

REPORT :

That in their opinion, it would seem, upon the first view of the subject, there could be no doubt of the propriety of granting the prayer of the petition. To encourage the dissemination of useful knowledge by aiding in the erection and organization of every kind of school for public instruction, has long been engrafted on the policy of the state. The facilities derived to these objects from an act of incorporation, have uniformly been granted to all who sought them, and in many honorable instances, while the pecuniary resources of the state permitted, have liberal endowments been made for the support of literary and scientific institutions. The wis-

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dom and correctness of this policy, it is presumed, will not be questioned, though errors may sometimes have been committed in adapting the means to the end proposed.

The committee, however, are aware, that in respect to the present application, a difference of opinion exists, not in relation to the general purposes and views of the applicants, the advancement of science, and particularly those branches more intimately connected with the study and practice of the healing art, but in relation to the question, whether those purposes and views will be promoted by adopting the mode which is desired? To this question the committee have given serious attention; and as it is considered of great importance, they deem it proper to submit their views of it to the Senate, somewhat more at large.

The opinion has been entertained, and by men, too, whose character and information entitle them to some deference, that for the purpose of procuring higher attainment and more diversified qualification in the different branches of science, the business of teaching should be confined to a limited number, and to this end it has been deemed sound policy not only to confine the patronage of government to particular institutions, but to throw disqualifications and embarrassment upon the exertions of others perhaps of equal or superior merit and skill, and thus producing, in effect, a sort of monopoly of learning. This opinion has been more especially applied to the school of medicine in the city of New-York. With respect to the pecuniary aid which it may be in the power and becomes the duty of government to bestow upon the literary institutions under its control, when its means are limited, there can be no doubt of the correctness of that policy which appropriates those means in such manner as to make them effectual to the object, instead of distributing them so generally that they become valueless in a too extensive diffusion.

But it may well be questioned whether it is sound policy, and more especially whether it is consistent with the true principles of our government, to throw either upon the business of teaching, or upon the acquirement of knowledge, any other shackles or disqualifications than such necessary regulations as are calculated to impose equal study and duties upon those who seek the attainment and require equal proficiency, from those who aspire to the privileges and rewards of science.

It should be borne in mind, that a monopoly of learning or knowledge cannot be created by legislative enactment. The fostering care with which the arm of power confers and sustains exclusive privileges in science, neither stimulates the exertions, increases the capacity, or elevates the views or character of those who may enjoy them. A monopoly of the business of teaching may indeed be effected; but should it even be conceded that this would produce higher attainments in literature in the few, it can never effect a more general diffusion of knowledge throughout the public mind, or be productive of so much general benefit. The latter should be the great object of legislative interference, though a constantly increasing elevation of the standard of that knowledge ought also to be regarded with interest. The most obvious effect of this monopoly is to quench the spirit of emulation, which, existing among scientific men, as well as between scientific institutions, is productive of vast benefits to the public at large. The immediate influence of that spirit "is to render all those engaged more industrious in seeking after knowledge, and more zealous to make it acceptable to others. Every improvement on one side leads to a desire to equal or excel on the other, and the results of these mutual efforts are at once rendered productively useful to the public," by a wider extended and more general diffusion of their benefits.

Besides, this general diffusion of scientific knowledge has another, and perhaps, no less important effect. It sends back to its own sources beneficial and material aids, to further development and still higher advances. It excites, while it furnishes greater means of gratifying, a desire for still deeper research, and a far wider range in the truths of science. Its operation is like that of the reflections of light and heat comingling with their own causes, and rendering the one more glaring, and the other more intense.

These views are strongly corroborated by the history of learning and useful knowledge, in every nation and period of the world. It was by the aid of such causes that our own country, in her advancement in science and every useful improvement, has been enabled, in the short period of fifty years, to accomplish the work of centuries in the old world.

And if these views are correct, can it be pretended that a monopoly of the business of instruction, which excludes the aid of such important auxiliaries, and tends to extinguish the very life spring of scientific improvement, is to be productive of higher attainment in all or any of the branches of science, even among those who enjoy the advantages of monopoly itself.

With respect to the necessity or expediency of permitting an additional medical school in the city of New-York, as distinct from the views already expressed, the committee would refer to the example of some of our sister states; in the principle cities of which, additional schools have been established by law, notwithstanding the previous existence of public schools, highly distinguished for learning and usefulness. The medical school in Philadelphia, under the control of the University of Pennsylvania, had long been advantageously known to the world of science: her teachers had gathered honor to the American name, and their pupils had borne the

evidence of their learning and capacity for instruction to every part of our country, yet did the legislature of that state authorise one of its western colleges to establish an additional medical faculty in Philadelphia. The wisdom of the policy has been sufficiently proved by the result and usefulness of the experiment.

And it can scarcely be doubted, that the greater population of New-York, and her enlarged means of drawing support to a literary institution of this character, from all parts of the Union as well as the West India islands, will justify a similar procedure.

The character of the applicants is too well known to need commendation or remark. Every friend to medical science must regret the necessity, if such necessity exists, that their talents and acquirements for instruction should be lost to society. The committee are not aware of any such necessity arising either from justice or policy. With a zeal and public spirit that have been condemned by some, but which the committee think commendable; and influenced, undoubtedly, by an anxiety to reap the just reward of long study and labor, by the exercise of their talents in a useful and honorable avocation, they have, at their own great private expense, erected and fitted up a building with superior accommodations and apparatus for instruction. That instruction has been pursued for three terms, under various auspices, with credit to themselves, and as there is reason to believe, with great advantage to those who have attended upon it during that period.

The measure prayed for by the petitioners, is highly approved by a large body of the most distinguished and efficient physicians and surgeons in the city of New-York; and as the committee entertain the opinion that it will tend to promote the interest of a science deeply and intimately con-

nected with the comfort and happiness of society, they have instructed their chairman to introduce a bill in accordance with the prayer of the petition. It is proper, however, to state, that one of the members of the committee has not concurred in the views expressed in this report.

J. L. VIELE, Ch'n.



